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What Does It Mean That God Will Destroy the Wisdom of the Wise?

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The church in Corinth faced significant division because many believers, in their spiritual immaturity, failed to grasp the power of the gospel message and the true wisdom of God. In 1 Corinthians 1:18–25, the apostle Paul highlights two types of wisdom: the wisdom of the wise (human, worldly wisdom) and the wisdom of God. These two types of wisdom are fundamentally opposed to each other.

Paul quotes Isaiah to illustrate that God does not need the world's wisdom and will, in fact, destroy it: *"For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.' Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?"* (1 Corinthians 1:19–20). By referencing Isaiah, Paul underscores the stark contrast between God's true wisdom and the world's counterfeit wisdom. Isaiah prophesied that God would dismantle worldly wisdom and confound the intelligent, primarily through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Those who consider themselves wise by worldly standards but regard the gospel as foolishness are ultimately ignorant because they miss out on God's forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. They are destined for destruction: *"The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God"* (1 Corinthians 1:18).

No one can come to know God through human wisdom alone (1 Corinthians 1:21; 2:13). The Greeks highly valued worldly wisdom, priding themselves on philosophy and intellectual debates, often creating gods from their imagination. They dismissed the message of Christ crucified as nonsense (1 Corinthians 1:23).

In today's world, the emphasis on empiricism and rationalism, which prioritize observable evidence and logical reasoning, mirrors the Greeks' pursuit of human wisdom. However, these approaches fall short in understanding spiritual truths. Human wisdom, through academic study alone, cannot lead one to God. Jesus said, *"You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life"* (John 5:39–40). This reveals that true knowledge of God comes through a relationship with Him, not merely through intellectual pursuit.

Paul speaks of "a secret and hidden wisdom" in 1 Corinthians 2:6–16, revealed by the Holy Spirit to believers. Only those indwelt by the Holy Spirit can understand and interpret spiritual truths (verse 13). *"But people who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means"* (verse 14). Those who think they are wise but only possess the wisdom of this age are doomed to perish (verse 6). Thus, God will destroy the wisdom of the wise.

Paul further stresses the folly of worldly wisdom by quoting Job and Psalms: *"Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, 'He catches the wise in their craftiness,' and again, 'The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile'"* (1 Corinthians 3:18–20). James also condemns earthly wisdom, calling it *"earthly, unspiritual, demonic"* (James 3:15).

Human wisdom, or intellectualism, is often rooted in pride (Psalm 73:7–9; Proverbs 3:7; Romans 1:22; 1 Corinthians 1:20; 3:18; 8:1). Pride stems from humanity's rebellion against God and refusal to submit to His ways (1 Samuel 15:23; Proverbs 21:4; Romans 1:29–30). Though God is patient and merciful, pursuing even the proudest sinners to the gates of hell, those who remain wise in their own eyes and try to fit God into their own plans and desires are on a path to destruction (Philippians 3:19; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; 2 Peter 2:1, 3). Persistent rebellion and refusal to repent lead to destruction (Proverbs 11:2; 16:5, 18; 18:12; 26:12; 29:23; 1 Peter 5:5; James 4:6).

God operates on principles contrary to worldly expectations: *"God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God"* (1 Corinthians 1:27–29). God will destroy the wisdom of the wise because only His wisdom is true, enduring, and ultimately wise.

Scripture also emphasizes that true understanding of God and His mysteries comes not through human education but through divine revelation. Jesus thanked the Father, saying, *"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children"* (Matthew 11:25). Similarly, in his letter to the Galatians, Paul asserts that his understanding of the gospel came directly from Jesus Christ, not from human teaching (Galatians 1:11-12).

Christ is identified as the wisdom of God, and this wisdom is accessible only through faith in Him. Colossians 2:2-3 states, *"My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."* Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 1:24, Scripture states clearly that Christ is the embodiment of God's wisdom: *"But to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God"* (1 Corinthians 1:24).

Today's educated people, including those who study theology without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, often fail to understand the deeper truths of God, particularly in these end-times. Daniel prophesied that only the wise would understand the end-time revelations: *"Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand"* (Daniel 12:10). This theme is echoed in Revelation, where wisdom and understanding are repeatedly linked to spiritual insight given by God (Revelation 13:18; 17:9). Scripture emphasizes that truly understanding God and His plans, including end-time prophecies, requires divine wisdom. Without the Holy Spirit of Christ, it is impossible to understand these revelations.

In conclusion, the wisdom of the world, whether derived from empiricism, rationalism, academic achievement, or even from those who claim enlightenment from a different source and have the power and authority to discover and implement innovative things in human eyes, is insufficient for understanding the true nature of God. Divine wisdom, revealed through Jesus Christ and understood by the Holy Spirit, surpasses all human knowledge. As Paul reminds us, *"The foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength"* (1 Corinthians 1:25).

Scripture consistently emphasizes that those who rely solely on worldly wisdom and reject divine truth are destined for destruction. In Proverbs 14:12, it is stated, *"There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death."* Similarly, 1 Corinthians 3:19 declares, *"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight."* Conversely, those who embrace God's wisdom will shine and rejoice forever. Daniel prophesied this glorious future in Daniel 12:3: *"Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever."* Jesus Himself affirmed this in Matthew 13:43, saying, *"Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear."*

Therefore, it is only through humility and faith that we can truly grasp the profound wisdom of God. By rejecting worldly wisdom and embracing divine wisdom, we align ourselves with the eternal truth that leads to everlasting life and joy.

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